

# Nevertheless, Big Cities Like Chicago Persisted to Reduce Vehicle Emissions

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In late March, President Donald Trump ordered the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reopen a feasibility review of 2022 through 2025 vehicle emissions rules, which would raise the fleet average fuel efficiency to more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025, [according to Business Insider](#). A rollback of the regulations would ease emissions restraints on more popular gas-powered vehicles. The review was not due until April 2018, but it was pushed up and approved prior to the 2017 inauguration.

But earlier in March, [30 cities including Chicago requested automakers build \\$10 billion worth of electric vehicles \(EVs\)](#) for a purchase of public utilities, transportation and public safety fleets, according to the Chicago Tribune. About 40 automakers, truck makers, bus makers and others responded to the request, which is a first step in the bidding process, according to Matt Petersen, Los Angeles's chief sustainability officer.

Under the coordination of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, co-founder of the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda, big city mayors still support President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, federal vehicle fuel efficiency standards and programs like Energy Star, [according to Natural Gas Intel](#). The [President's Executive Order Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth](#) revoked four of former President Barack Obama's orders and memos and rescinded two reports as it withdrew technical policy documents — all related to climate change impacts and actions, emissions reduction strategies and mitigating natural resources impacts.

The [U.S. Conference of Mayor urged the Federal government to stick with plans to lower greenhouse gas emissions](#), including energy efficient transportation options, under the new administration.

"Nothing can stop us from investing in EVs and mass transit; from ending our reliance on coal; from installing cool roofs and pavement or from leading America in solar power," Garcetti said in a [prepared statement](#) about the [#climatemayors letter to Trump](#) they wrote the same day the ink dried on the official order.

## Chicago's EV Pursuit

Chicago is ranked third in the list of 11 cities that will be funded by Electrify America, a subsidiary of Volkswagen created to implement rules of it's settlement over its clean diesel vehicles, to build a network of electric vehicle charging stations. The city [previously hired 350Green to build the largest electric vehicle charging network in the country](#), but in 2015, the California-based company was indicted for defrauding the city, subcontractors and agencies. The network didn't happen.

Nevertheless, Chicago's clean energy transportation initiative persisted.

Chicago Area Clean Cities (CACC) is a nonprofit coalition focused on promoting cleaner energy for transportation and automotive fleets in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. According to a CACC representative, a variety of vehicle types including CNG, propane and electric vehicles are found throughout several active fleets in the area are reducing vehicle emissions.

In 2015, [CACC's member fleets saved more than 25 million gasoline-gallon equivalents of petroleum and 225,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions](#). For 2016, [CACC awarded its 2016 top green fleets and named a Clean Fuels Champion](#) — the regional planning organization Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

CMAP organizes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will Counties in northeastern Illinois. CACC says it was the champion of it's coalition because the agency developed and implemented the GO TO 2040 and ON

TO 2050 comprehensive regional plans. The coordinated local strategies in the plans focus the region's 284 communities on addressing key transportation, housing, economic development, environment and other issues.

The agency also oversees the region's [U.S. Department of Transportation's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement \(CMAQ\) Program](#), which had provided federal funding for transportation improvements designed to improve air quality and alleviate congestion. The program falls under the FAST Act, which [according to the American Road & Building Association's analysis of the proposed Trump budget](#), much to their chagrin, is on the chopping block.

In part using CMAQ funds, the CACC funded alternative fuel and diesel emissions reduction projects like:

- [Indiana Harbor Belt Compressed Natural Gas \(CNG\) Railroad Project](#)
- [Drive Clean Chicago](#)
- [Chicago-area Green Fleets Grant Program](#)
- Chicago-area alternative fueling stations for municipalities

CACC 2016 Top Five Green Fleets supported by Drive Clean Chicago include both large public and private fleets running daily throughout the region.

DuPage County was recognized because half of its fleet maintaining more than 950 miles of highways is churning alternative fuels that offer reduced vehicle emissions. "We're proud to be a government leader in taking voluntary, progressive actions to reduce diesel emissions and implement efficient vehicle technologies," said Don Puchalski, chairman of the County Board's Transportation Committee.

Taking top honors on the commercial side was Alpha Baking, which supplies regional food stores and restaurants, fast food and local school systems.

"We couldn't have made the switch to propane and electric without the assistance of Clean Cities," said Bob McGuire, vice president and director of logistics for the company. "It's been terrific for our company, our drivers, and our customers, and we're very proud of our efforts to be a good corporate citizen."

Details about fleets with reduced vehicle emissions:

- **Alpha Baking Company:** Fifteen percent of Alpha Baking's fleet uses alternative fuels — with 28 propane-fueled trucks and five all-electric trucks. The company has 300-plus vehicles, 20 distribution centers located throughout the Midwest and six production plants – three in Chicago, one in La Porte, Ind., one in Grand Rapids, Mich., and one in Manitowoc, Wisc.
- **DuPage County:** The DuPage County Division of Transportation is responsible for the safe operation and maintenance of more than 950 lane-miles of arterial highways. The county's fleet department maintains more than 440 county-owned vehicles of which 220 actively use alternate fuels. Alternative-fuel vehicles account for 50 percent of the fleet, including: 19 flex-fuel E-85 vehicles, 12 hybrids, 161 biodiesel vehicles, 27 CNG-powered vehicles, and one electric vehicle. Over the past five years, DuPage County has purchased an average of 21,000 therms of CNG, which is equivalent to 18,500 gallons of gasoline and also used an average of 100,000 gallons of biodiesel fuel.
- **Starfish Transportation:** Starfish Transportation provides school bus transportation in the Chicago area and surrounding suburbs. Currently, Starfish has 40 propane buses on order to add to their existing fleet. Starfish's fleet travels more than 7,200,000 miles in a year while transporting clients.
- **Gold Standard Transportation:** Gold Standard Transportation is an asset-based, family-owned company, located in Crestwood, Ill. The transportation and logistics company operates primarily within the Midwest region. The company has a fleet of 10 CNG tractors that save more than 200,000 gallons of diesel fuel each

year.

- **R&D Bus Company:** Chicago-based R&D Bus Company has a fleet of 90 school buses, 20 of which are powered by clean-burning propane. R&D's team says its goal is to eventually convert its entire fleet to propane. R&D has provided bus service for Chicago Public Schools for 25 years, and also works with children's museums, city colleges, the Forest Preserves of Cook County and various other customers throughout the Chicagoland area.

### **Charging in the Driver's Seat**

The Trump budget may end federal seed money for fuel efficiency programs under the FAST Act, but nevertheless, Chicago's embrace of electric vehicles and buses is likely to persist. Electrify American infrastructure improvements will put charging in five different types of developments, ranging from multifamily homes to public parking lots, as well as implement a long distance highway network of fast chargers spaced about 66 miles apart on interstates I-75, I-94, I-80 and possibly others intersecting with the Chicagoland metropolis.

EV proponents are hopeful the charging network that is about to get underway will reduce range anxiety — the state where an electric vehicle driver is worried to drive a long distance for fear of an inability to charge up. The comfort of a vast network could move more public and private consumers to purchase more electric vehicles and fleets, ramping up production, and hopefully jobs, too.